

Central Theme

The main theme of this Surah is building a strong Islamic community. Muslims must unite to become to spread the Word of Allah^{SWT} and to defend against the attacks on Islam and Muslims. The nucleus of a strong community is a strong family structure based on respect for all members: parents, wife, husband, siblings, children, and orphans. A strong community can only be built with all parts of it having high moral character and values.

Main Subject Matter and the Divine Guidance

During the period of the revelation of this Surah, RasulAllah^{SAW} faced challenges in three broad areas:

1. How to organize the new Islamic society:

Madinah was the center of Muslims, both those who migrated from Makkah. (the Mahajirs) and those among the locals who had accepted Islam (the Ansars). A framework of principles in the moral, social, economic, and political areas was needed to establish a strong Islamic society and to do away with the practices of the days of Ignorance (Jahilliyah). At this stage the Islamic society is given additional guidelines through this surah beyond what was provided in Suratul Baqarah. The Muslims are told, in much greater detail, how to mold their collective life according to the Islamic Shariah. The following points are made:

- All mankind is created from a single person, that is of Adam^{AS}.
- Muslims are told to organize their family life on the basis of justice, love and respect for every member of the family, male or female.
- Women should be respected. Muslims are told that women also have rights over men, thus putting a stop to the pre-Islamic practice of degrading women.
- Marriage is a sacred relationship, and marrying of close relatives (mahram and mahramaht) is forbidden.
- The rights of orphans are defined
- Laws of distribution of inheritance are defined.
- Guidance is given on how to resolve family disputes.
- The foundations of penal code is laid down.

2. How to counter the fierce opposition from the enemies of Islam:

The enemies of Islam by now felt very concerned and threatened by the tremendous appeal of Islam among the Arab tribes. Therefore, they launched all sorts of attacks on Muslims. Muslims needed to be trained to defend against these attacks. The setbacks suffered by the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud encouraged the pagan Arab tribes, the neighboring Jews, and the hypocrites to increase their effort against Islam. The result was that Muslims encountered dangers from all sides. Allah^{SWT} urged the Muslims to meet these attacks bravely. He revealed inspiring passages and instructed them how to conduct themselves when faced with armed conflict. In Madinah the hypocrites and those weak of faith were spreading all kinds of rumors to demoralize the Muslims. To counteract it, the Muslims were advised to verify the rumors before passing them on. During the armed conflicts, it was necessary for the Muslims to go on military expeditions. Often they traveled by routes where prescribed methods of preparing and offering prayers were not possible. Allah^{SWT} made it easy for them in permitting alternatives. If water was not available, Tayammum was permitted for both major and minor cleanliness. To reduce hardship during traveling, Muslims were allowed to shorten the prayers. The attitude of Jewish tribes, Banu Nadeer in particular, and the hypocrites had become extremely hostile towards Muslims. The Jews blatantly violated the agreements made with Muslims, supported the enemies of Islam, and engaged in conspiracies against RasulAllah^{SAW}. They were warned against their mischief.

3. How to spread the message of Islam:

In order to do this task against so many difficulties, Muslims were commanded to strengthen their ʿimān and obey Rasūl Allāh ^{SAW}. They were that they will be victorious over the enemies of Islam only through moral excellence.